

The Influence of Rural Tourists' Perceived Value on Behavior Intention: A Case Study of Henan Province, China

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Abstract

Rural tourism has emerged as a significant leisure activity, receiving national policy support and becoming a key pathway for rural revitalization. However, it still faces notable challenges in accurately capturing visitor needs and systematically enhancing perceived value. To address this core issue, this study draws upon Walter Mischel's Cognitive–Affective Processing System (CAPS) theory to construct a “Cognitive–Affective–Behavioral” research framework. By integrating visitor perception theory and defining dimensions of perceived value in rural tourism based on Henan Province's development context, the study formulates research hypotheses. Using convenience sampling, this study selected rural tourism visitors in Henan Province as the research sample and collected 395 valid questionnaires. Findings indicate: 1) Perceived value significantly and positively influences both visitor satisfaction and behavioral intention; 2) Visitor satisfaction also significantly and positively impacts behavioral intention; 3) Visitor satisfaction mediates the effect of landscape value on behavioral intention.

Keywords: rural tourism; perceived value theory; behavioral intention

Introduction

Rural tourism originated in Europe in the early 19th century, initially focusing on agricultural sightseeing. Spanish scholars categorize it as traditional (urban residents visiting relatives in the countryside) and modern (integrating landscape appreciation and cultural experiences). In 2006, China adopted “China Rural Tourism” as its tourism theme, ushering in a new phase of development. As residents' material needs are met, the pursuit of a better life and constraints on leisure time have made the countryside—with its fresh environment, rustic charm, and slow pace—an important recreational choice for urban dwellers. As a “bridge” connecting

urban and rural areas, rural tourism has received sustained policy support from the state. Between 2016 and 2023, the State Council and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism successively introduced planning and financial policies, incorporating them into tourism innovation directions and key measures for rural revitalization, thereby contributing to the optimization of urban–rural structures and rural development. Following the 2017 launch of the Rural Revitalization Strategy, rural tourism—as an experiential industry—has played a significant role in driving industrial integration, increasing farmers' incomes, improving rural environments, and alleviating issues such as “hollowing out” and “homogenization.” It has thus become a key pathway for rural revitalization. Although rural tourism is currently developing rapidly and attracting academic attention, existing research primarily focuses on development and design, with limited exploration of visitor perceived value, behavioral intentions, and their interrelationships. Due to uneven facilities and services in rural tourist areas, pronounced seasonal fluctuations in tourism, and difficulties in attracting repeat visitors, enhancing the perceived value of tourism has become a focal point for both academia and rural tourism development. Studying visitor–perceived value is crucial for rural tourism destinations to improve service quality, strengthen core competitiveness, and achieve high–quality development.

Research Objectives

The research objectives were developed from the information that was analyzed from reviewing the literature of books, texts, and journal articles, and are presented below:

1. Explore the dimensions of tourists' perceived value in the context of rural tourism by using theoretical and empirical research methods, designing key measurement indicators, and conducting empirical analysis.
2. Explore the relationship between tourists' perceived value and behavioral intention.
3. Through data analysis, verify whether tourist satisfaction as an intermediary variable has an impact on the relationship between perceived value and behavioral intention.

Literature Review

Perceived Value Theory

Tourist perceived value originates from customer perceived value theory, representing a shift in focus from the “customer” in marketing to the “tourist” in the tourism industry. Sung et al. (1996) define it as the comparison between tourists' anticipated and actual experiences

during travel. Scholars differ in their conceptualization of its dimensions: Gallarza and Saura (2006), studying university group tours, categorized it into eight dimensions, including efficiency and service quality; Liu et al. (2022) proposed measurement dimensions, including service value, cost value, experiential value, emotional value, and resource value. Some scholars have categorized it as ecological, historical and cultural, educational, and recreational value. This study, grounded in the rural tourism context, defines perceived value as comprising five dimensions: landscape value, service value, emotional value, cost value, and social value.

Tourist Satisfaction

The concept of tourist satisfaction originated from American customer satisfaction research in the 1960s. American scholar Cardozo first proposed this concept in 1965 and applied it to marketing. Subsequently, multiple researchers offered different interpretations of tourist satisfaction. Pizam et al. (1978), Beard and Ragheb (1980), Swan et al. (1981), Giese (2000), and others have associated it with comparisons between visitor expectations and actual experiences/perceptions. Existing research on satisfaction measurement can be categorized into two evaluation dimensions: overall satisfaction and attribute satisfaction.

Behavioral Intentions

Initially developed in marketing to measure consumer propensity toward products/services, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined it as the subjective probability that an individual will engage in a specific action. Engel et al. (1995) noted that tourists develop behavioral tendencies post-trip due to new cognitions. Some scholars also define it as the likelihood that tourists will revisit a destination and recommend it to others after their trip. This paper adopts this definition, defining behavioral intention in rural tourism as tourists' willingness to revisit and recommend participation to others after their experience.

Research on the Relationship Among Perceived Value, Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intention

The relationship among perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intention is a hot topic in tourism consumer behavior studies, with mutual influences among these three factors. Tam (2004) proposed that perceived value can influence behavioral intention directly or indirectly through satisfaction, with the direct effect being more substantial. Sun and Jia (2020) employed the “cognitive–affective–intentional” relationship theory to construct a structural equation model of perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intention among tourists at 23 homestays in

Shandong Province. Zhao (2022) argues that visitor satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between the five dimensions of perceived value and tourists' behavioral intentions.

Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1–H5: Landscape value, service value, emotional value, social value, and cost value have a significant positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

H6–H10: Landscape value, service value, emotional value, social value, and cost value have a significant positive impact on tourist behavioral intention.

H11: Tourist satisfaction has a significant positive impact on tourist behavior intention.

H12–H16: Tourist satisfaction mediates the effects of landscape value, service value, emotional value, social value, and cost value on behavioral intention.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review hypothesis, the framework diagram of this study was constructed, as shown in Figure 1.

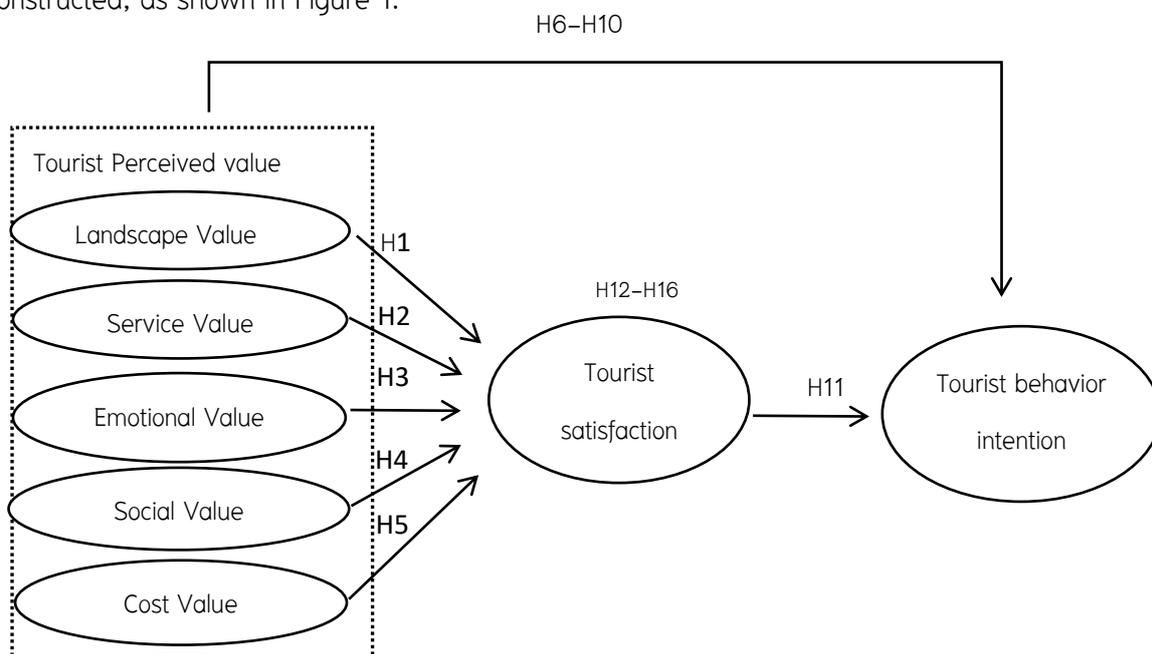


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Sample and data collection

This study is a quantitative research project that uses rural tourism destinations in Henan Province as the case study area and rural tourism visitors as the research subjects. A non-

probability convenience sampling method was employed for this investigation. Given the spatial and temporal variations in the tourism source market, the survey employed both online and on-site distribution. Online distribution primarily involved sharing a QR code for the Wenjuanxing questionnaire in WeChat groups of tourists participating in organized tours to Henan's rural tourism destinations. On-site distribution targeted relatively concentrated rural tourism destinations in Zhengzhou, Luoyang, Jiaozuo, Xinyang, and other cities in Henan Province, serving as representative samples. The survey period spanned four and a half months, from February 1 to mid-June 2025. A total of 448 questionnaires were distributed, of which 432 were returned. After excluding invalid responses, 395 valid responses were obtained. Overall, the questionnaire return rate reached 96.43%, and the validity rate was 91.44%, indicating satisfactory survey completion.

Measures

Based on the literature review, this paper adopts a quantitative research method and designs a questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932). The questionnaires in this study are all adapted from previous mature scales. This study defines tourist perceived value as comprising five dimensions: landscape value, service value, emotional value, social value, and cost value. The landscape value dimension draws on Zhu's (2019) established scale, whereas service value perception uses scales from Teoman and Anna (2005). Emotional value is measured using Jiao's (2021) established scale, and social value is measured using Bu Mai'er Yan's (2020) established scale. Moreover, cost values are drawn from Zhou (2020). To avoid duplicative measurement of perceived value and satisfaction, this study directly uses overall satisfaction as the evaluation dimension, drawing on Zhong's (2022) overall satisfaction scale. Behavioral intention is primarily manifested in "willingness to revisit" and "willingness to recommend," drawing from Zhang's (2021) established scale. The questionnaire was finally approved by the STIU-HREC101/2024 ethical review certification.

Data analysis

This study employed SPSS 24.0 and AMOS 24.0 to conduct descriptive statistics, reliability and validity analyses, model fit testing, and hypothesis testing. It validated the path model depicting the relationships among perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intention among rural tourism visitors, as well as the research hypotheses.

Research Results

Sample Characteristics

As shown in Table 1, the sample exhibits a relatively balanced gender ratio, with males accounting for 45.45% and females for 54.55%, indicating a slight predominance of female tourists. Master's degree holders constitute 36.36% of the sample, indicating a high level of educational attainment. Occupations are predominantly professional and technical personnel (27.27%) and corporate employees (18.18%), demonstrating broad coverage. Based on the sample's demographic characteristics, the sample is generally representative.

Table 1: Descriptive statistical analysis

Variable	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage
Gender	Male	185	46.8
	Female	210	53.2
Age	20–25 years old	92	23.3
	26–35 years old	117	29.6
	36–45 years old	110	27.8
	46–55 years old	56	14.2
	56 years old and above	20	5.1
Educational attainment	High school and below	33	8.4
	College	57	14.4
	Bachelor's degree	166	42
	Master's degree	114	28.9
	Doctorate	25	6.3
Occupation	Student	60	15.2
	Government and party official	30	7.6
	Company employee	99	25.1
	Self-employed	20	5.1
	Professional (including teachers, lawyers, doctors, accountants, architects, etc.)	121	30.6
	Freelancer	28	7.1
	Other	37	9.4
Total		395	100

Measurement model

The measurement model demonstrated excellent fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 1.985$ (< 3.0), RMSEA = 0.050 (< 0.08), SRMR = 0.047 (< 0.08), IFI = 0.933 (> 0.90), TLI = 0.926 (> 0.90), and CFI = 0.933 (> 0.90). These results indicate that the measurement model adequately represents the observed data.

Reliability and Validity Analysis

Table 2 shows that all variables exhibit Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.7, indicating high reliability, stability, and internal consistency (Fornell & Larcke, 1981). Construct validity, assessed through convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2011), is supported by AVE values above 0.5 and by AVE values exceeding squared inter-construct correlations (Table 3), confirming robust convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity

Variable	ITEM	Mean	S.D.	Standardized factor loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach' α
Landscape value	LV1	3.65	1.048	0.725	0.870	0.572	0.866
	LV2	3.86	0.899	0.838			
	LV3	3.89	1.002	0.733			
	LV4	3.84	0.921	0.742			
	LV5	3.79	0.973	0.738			
Service value	SEV1	3.55	0.934	0.667	0.853	0.538	0.849
	SEV2	3.36	0.925	0.726			
	SEV3	3.35	0.909	0.820			
	SEV4	3.55	0.867	0.741			
	SEV5	3.25	1.026	0.704			
Emotional value	EV1	3.77	0.813	0.673	0.869	0.571	0.863
	EV2	3.82	0.802	0.787			
	EV3	3.83	0.823	0.779			
	EV4	3.74	0.910	0.690			
	EV5	3.89	0.748	0.836			
Social value	SOV1	3.95	0.721	0.658	0.868	0.571	0.868
	SOV2	3.79	0.798	0.707			
	SOV3	3.82	0.831	0.778			
	SOV4	3.67	0.912	0.802			
	SOV5	3.64	0.903	0.820			

Variable	ITEM	Mean	S.D.	Standardized factor loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach' α
Cost value	CV1	3.57	0.883	0.650	0.869	0.572	0.864
	CV2	3.60	0.922	0.696			
	CV3	3.84	0.793	0.798			
	CV4	3.86	0.781	0.801			
	CV5	3.89	0.764	0.821			
Tourist satisfaction	TS1	3.73	0.780	0.717	0.885	0.608	0.880
	TS2	3.62	0.851	0.723			
	TS3	3.81	0.795	0.847			
	TS4	3.80	0.754	0.888			
	TS5	3.88	0.792	0.705			
Tourist behavior intention	TBI1	3.68	0.932	0.779	0.889	0.616	0.887
	TBI2	3.38	1.034	0.854			
	TBI3	3.22	1.050	0.774			
	TBI4	3.70	0.875	0.722			
	TBI5	3.76	0.908	0.791			

Table 3 Discriminant Validity

Construct	LV	SEV	EV	SOV	CV	TS	TBI
LV	0.756						
SEV	0.606	0.733					
EV	0.461	0.501	0.756				
SOV	0.491	0.522	0.514	0.756			
CV	0.414	0.520	0.430	0.491	0.756		
TS	0.567	0.608	0.586	0.595	0.554	0.780	
TBI	0.578	0.622	0.584	0.599	0.545	0.653	0.785

Note: LV = Landscape Value, SEV = Service Value, EV = Emotional Value, SOV = Social Value, CV = Cost Value, TS = Tourist Satisfaction, TBI = Tourist Behavior Intention. Diagonal elements (bold) represent $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$; off-diagonal elements are correlations. For discriminant validity, $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ should exceed the highest correlation with other constructs.

Hypothesis Tests

Following reliability and confirmatory factor analyses, it was determined that the reliability and validity of all variables were satisfactory, thereby enabling the construction of a structural equation model. The AMOS 24.0 software was used to establish the structural equation model, yielding path coefficients and model fit indices. In the figure, bidirectional arrows indicate connections among exogenous variables, whereas unidirectional arrows indicate causal

relationships between external and internal exogenous variables. With tourism Behavior intention as the dependent variable, landscape value, service value, emotional value, social value, and cost value as independent variables, and tourism satisfaction as the mediating variable, the estimation method was maximum likelihood, with $P < 0.05$ indicating statistical significance.

The χ^2/df value is 1.985, which is less than 3. The RMSEA and SRMR values are 0.050 and 0.047, respectively, both of which are less than 0.08. The values for IFI, TLI, and CFI are 0.933, 0.926, and 0.933, respectively, all greater than 0.9. Overall, the model's fit indices are satisfactory.

Table 4 Path Analysis

Assume	Path	β	S.E.	C.R.	P	Results
H1	Tourist satisfaction <--- Landscape value	0.171	0.043	2.922	0.003	accepted
H2	Tourist satisfaction <--- Service value	0.186	0.058	2.877	0.004	accepted
H3	Tourist satisfaction <--- Emotional value	0.228	0.057	4.077	***	accepted
H4	Tourist satisfaction <--- Social value	0.205	0.069	3.518	***	accepted
H5	Tourist satisfaction <--- Cost value	0.188	0.053	3.454	***	accepted
H6	Tourists' behavioral intention <--- Landscape value	0.149	0.056	2.559	0.010	accepted
H7	Tourists' behavioral intention <--- Service value	0.173	0.075	2.680	0.007	accepted
H8	Tourists' behavioral intention <--- Emotional value	0.175	0.074	3.126	0.002	accepted
H9	Tourists' behavioral intention <--- Social value	0.169	0.089	2.913	0.004	accepted
H10	Tourists' behavioral intention <--- Cost value	0.132	0.069	2.430	0.015	accepted
H11	Tourists' behavioral intention <--- Tourist satisfaction	0.187	0.086	2.832	0.005	accepted

Table 4 presents the path analysis. Landscape value has a significant positive effect on tourism satisfaction ($\beta = 0.171, P < 0.01$), supporting hypothesis H1. Service value has a significant positive impact on tourism satisfaction ($\beta= 0.186, P<0.01$), proving that hypothesis H2 is valid. Emotional value has a significant positive impact on tourist satisfaction ($\beta= 0.228, P < 0.001$), confirming the validity of hypothesis H3. Social value has a significant positive impact on tourist satisfaction ($\beta= 0.205, P < 0.001$), confirming the validity of hypothesis H4. Cost value has a significant positive impact on tourism satisfaction ($\beta= 0.188, P < 0.001$), confirming the validity of hypothesis H5. Landscape value has a significant positive impact on tourism Behavior intention ($\beta= 0.149, P<0.05$), confirming the validity of hypothesis H6. Service value has a significant positive impact on tourism Behavior intention ($\beta = 0.173, P < 0.01$), thereby confirming hypothesis H7. Emotional value has a significant positive impact on tourism Behavior intention ($\beta= 0.175, P < 0.01$), confirming the validity of hypothesis H8. Social value has a significant positive impact on tourism Behavior intention ($\beta= 0.169, P < 0.01$), confirming the validity of hypothesis H9. Cost value has a significant positive impact on tourism Behavior intention ($\beta= 0.132, P < 0.05$), confirming the validity of hypothesis H10. Tourism satisfaction has a significant positive impact on tourism Behavior intention ($\beta= 0.187, P < 0.01$), confirming the validity of hypothesis H11.

Mediation Effects

To more accurately validate the mediating effect, the Bootstrap method was employed with 5,000 bootstrap resamples at the 95% confidence level. The sampling method utilized the bias-corrected nonparametric percentile approach. Table 5 presents the mediating effect test results, confirming that TS mediates the relationships between LV, SV, EV, SOV, CV, and TBI, and that this mediation is partial.

Table 5 Mediation Effect Checklist

Mediation Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	% Mediated	Mediation Type
LV → TS → TBI	0.149*	0.032*	0.181*	17.7%	Partial
SEV → TS →TBI	0.173*	0.035*	0.207*	16.9%	Partial
EV → TS → TBI	0.175*	0.043*	0.218*	19.7%	Partial
SOV → TS → TBI	0.169*	0.038*	0.208*	18.3%	Partial
CV → TS → TBI	0.132*	0.035*	0.167*	21.0%	Partial

Note: LV=Landscape Value, SEV=Service Value, EV=Emotional Value, SOV=Social Value, CV=Cost Value, TS=Tourist Satisfaction, BI=behavior Intention. *p < 0.05. All mediation effects are partial mediation.

Discussion

This study confirms that perceived value has a significant positive influence on tourist satisfaction, consistent with findings by Peng and Xiao (2022), Liu et al. (2022), and Zhang (2024). In the context of rural tourism, this study defines perceived value for rural tourists across five dimensions: landscape, service, emotional, social, and cost. All five dimensions exert a significant positive influence on satisfaction, with effects ranked from highest to lowest as follows: emotional value ($\beta=0.228$), social value ($\beta=0.205$), cost value ($\beta=0.188$), service value ($\beta=0.186$), and landscape value ($\beta=0.171$). The study also expands previous research by revealing the relative importance and effect patterns of each dimension.

This study verifies that tourists' perceived value also significantly and positively influences their behavioral intentions. This finding aligns with the research of scholars such as Zhang (2024). Findings indicate that more positive perceptions of landscape, service, affective, social, and cost values correlate with higher behavioral intentions such as revisiting and recommending. The direct effect patterns of each dimension on satisfaction differ in magnitude, ranked from strongest to weakest: affective value ($\beta = 0.175, p < 0.01$), service value ($\beta = 0.173, p < 0.01$), social value ($\beta = 0.169, p < 0.01$), landscape value ($\beta = 0.149, p < 0.05$), and cost value ($\beta = 0.132, p < 0.05$). This provides insights into immediate behavioral influences and mediating behavioral influences.

This study confirms that visitor satisfaction exerts a significant positive influence on behavioral intentions, consistent with findings from Hao (2018), Zhang (2024), and Zhou (2020). Research indicates that satisfaction positively impacts visitors' behavioral intentions, meaning high satisfaction fosters positive evaluations and recommendation behaviors, equivalent to gaining free and credible word-of-mouth promotion.

Notably, this study further reveals that visitor satisfaction mediates the effect of perceived value on behavioral intention, consistent with findings by Tam (2004) and Sun and Jia (2020). This indicates that perceived value not only directly influences behavioral intention but also indirectly affects it through the intermediary role of enhancing visitor satisfaction.

New Knowledge from Research

This study introduces tourist perceived value theory, tourist behavior intention, and other management theories, studies rural tourism from the perspective of tourist perception, clarifies the measurement indicators of tourist perceived value in the field of rural tourism, promotes the research process based on tourist perceived value in rural tourism development, and enriches the application of tourist perceived value theory in rural tourism development. Secondly, this study conducts a correlation analysis of tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and behavioral intention to comprehensively understand the impact of tourists' attitudes, behaviors, and loyalty on rural tourism.

Conclusions

The validation results indicate that perceived value has a significant positive impact on visitor satisfaction, visitor satisfaction has a significant positive impact on visitor behavioral intention, and visitor perceived value has a significant positive impact on visitor behavioral intention. Furthermore, visitor satisfaction mediates the effect of landscape value on behavioral intention.

Suggestions

Research on perceived value and behavioral intentions is important, focusing not only on tourists' perceptions during travel but also on their post-trip intentions to revisit or recommend destinations. The practical significance of this study lies in understanding how perceived value influences tourist behavior, exploring avenues to enhance visitor satisfaction and visit frequency, and thereby promoting the sustainable development of rural tourism.

However, current research requires strengthening qualitative and theoretical approaches, as reliance solely on questionnaires and quantitative analysis cannot fully uncover practical issues and their underlying causes. Future work could incorporate additional dimensions and perceptual factors into the rural tourism perceived value model. Greater contributions from scholars and industry professionals to related theoretical research are also anticipated.

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